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AREI UPDATES: Water Quality Program

Updates on Agricultural Resources and Environmental Indicators

Natural Resources and Environment Division
Economic Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture

1995
Number 11

USDA's Water Quality Program Enters its 6th Year

- 65 new water quality projects were started in 1995, and 6 projects were completed at the end of 1994. Over 400 projects have been started since 1990.
- Funding set aside by USDA for Water Quality Program and assisted activities in 1995, including research, education, technical assistance, financial assistance, and database development totaled \$80 million.
- Participating agencies have committed to carrying on project activities beyond the original 1995 deadline.

Residuals from agricultural production that reduce water quality in parts of the United States include soil erosion; runoff of fertilizers, animal waste, and pesticides into rivers and streams; and leaching of nutrients and pesticides into ground water. In 1990, USDA made a commitment to protect the Nation's waters from agricultural chemicals and waste products by establishing the Water Quality Program (WQP). The program is now into its sixth year.

From 1990 through 1994, USDA spent over \$357 million on research, education, technical assistance, financial assistance, and database development in direct support of the WQP. An additional \$80 million has been committed for 1995.

Over 400 projects that provide education, technical, and financial assistance to landowners were initiated through 1994. In 1995, an additional 65 Water Quality Incentive Projects (WQIP) were started, bringing the total number of WQIP projects to 242. The number of Hydrologic Unit Area (HUA) projects decreased by six, to 68. Thirty-one of the 37 HUA projects scheduled to end in 1994 were extended beyond 1995. Proposals for extending the projects scheduled to end in 1995 are currently being considered. Extensions are granted on the basis of continuing need and the probability that program goals will be achieved.

One of the 16 Demonstration Projects (DP) was completed in 1994, leaving 15. All 15 have been extended beyond their scheduled completion dates. The HUA and DP projects are currently receiving funding for education and technical assistance activities. Financial assistance is only being offered in the WQIP projects.

The Management System Evaluation Area (MSEA) research program was expanded to six projects with the addition of a project in Mississippi. This extends the MSEA program to cropping systems not found in the Midwest.

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About AREI UPDATES

AREI UPDATES is a periodic series that supplements and updates information in **Agricultural Resources and Environmental Indicators (AREI)**, USDA, ERS, AH-705, Dec. 1994. UPDATES report recent data from surveys of farm operators and others knowledgeable about changing agricultural resource use and conditions, with only minimal interpretation or analysis. Please contact the individual listed at the end of the text for additional information about the data in this UPDATE. If you would like to be added to the mailing list or have other questions about AREI UPDATES or AREI, contact Richard Magleby, (202) 219-0436.

Water Quality Program projects, by State, 1990-1995

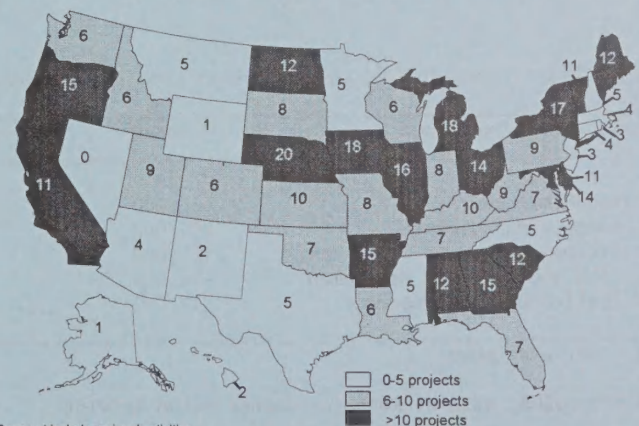


Table 1—Status of Water Quality Program (WQP) and associated activities, fiscal years 1992-1995

Activity	Unit	1992	1993	1994	1995 enacted
Educational, technical, and financial assistance activities:					
Demonstration Projects:					
Number of active projects	Number	16	16	16	15
Total USDA funding ¹	Mil. dol.	8.5	7.7	5.8	5.7
Ratio education/technical/financial	Percent	25/54/21	29/60/11	36/64/0	37/63/0
Hydrologic Unit Area projects:					
Number of active projects:	Number	74	74	74	68
Total USDA funding	Mil. dol.	28.1	17.3	15.0	14.7
Ratio education/technical/financial	Percent	14/43/43	20/60/11	27/73/0	28/72/0
Water Quality Special Projects:					
Number of project started	Number	35	2	0	0
Total USDA funding	Mil. dol.	9.1	1.1	0	0
Ratio education/technical/financial	Percent	0/5/95	0/5/95	NA	NA
Water Quality Incentive Projects:					
Number of projects started	Number	0	106	71	65
Project acres	Mil. acre	0	4.8	3.8	8.4
Total USDA funding	Mil. dol.	6.8 ²	15.0	15.0	12.2
Regional activities:					
Regional continuing projects	Number	5	6	6	6
Estuaries of National Significance	Number	21	21	21	21
Total USDA funding	Mil. dol.	23.1	22.1	25.2	15.1
Ratio education/technical/financial	Percent	0/58/42	0/63/37	0/67/33	0/96/4
Improved program support:					
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service	Mil. dol.	4.5	4.5	4.1	4.1
Natural Resources Conservation Service	Mil. dol.	7.6	7.6	8.1	7.9
Economic Research Service	Mil. dol.	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4
Research and development activities:					
Management System Evaluation Areas	Number	5	5	5	6
ARS expenditures	Mil. dol.	15.3	15.3	15.3	15.3
CSREES research grants	Mil. dol.	9.0	9.0	4.2	2.8
ERS collaboration	Mil. dol.	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4
Database development and evaluation activities:					
ERS for agricultural chemical database	Mil. dol.	1.9	2.3	1.0	1.0
CSREES for chemical database support	Mil. dol.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
National Agricultural Library for information center	Mil. dol.	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Total USDA funding for WQP and associated activities	Mil. dol.	115.5	103.5	95.1	80.2

¹Excludes funds to ERS, which are included under improved program support.²Funds distributed to 49 existing HUAs.

NA - Not applicable

Source: USDA, Office of Budget and Program Analysis

Table 2—Achievements in Hydrologic Unit Area and Demonstration Projects, fiscal year 1993

Conservation technique	Acres	Average reduction
Nitrogen management	462,000	42 pounds/acre
Phosphorus management	245,000	40 pounds/acre
Pesticide management	181,000	0.6 pound a.i./acre
Erosion and sediment management	494,000	NA
Irrigation water management	119,000	11.3 acre-inches water

NA = not available

Source: USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service.

Water Quality Program Activities

Hydrologic Unit Area Projects—Watersheds with identified nonpoint-source water quality problems. With financial assistance (prior to 1994) from Consolidated Farm Services Agency and technical assistance and education from Natural Resources Conservation Service and Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, local landowners apply water quality practices to meet State water quality goals without undue economic hardship.

Demonstration Projects—Educational and technical assistance efforts for showing farmers and ranchers cost-effective agricultural production techniques and systems that minimize the movement of pesticides and nutrients into water resources. Some financial assistance was provided during 1990-1993.

Water Quality Incentive Projects—Designed to achieve reductions of nonpoint-source agricultural pollutants in an environmentally and economically sound manner. Projects are targeted to small watersheds. Agricultural producers in the project area are provided with financial assistance to make changes in management systems to restore or enhance water resources impaired by agricultural sources of pollution. Funding is through the Agricultural Conservation Program.

Water Quality Special Projects—Provided cost-share assistance to farmers and ranchers for installing approved water quality practices in small watersheds with identified agricultural nonpoint-source problems. Funding was through the Agricultural Conservation Program. No new projects were funded after 1992, with resources being shifted to the Water Quality Incentive Projects. One-hundred ten Water Quality Special Projects were initiated, each lasting 1-2 years.

Regional Projects—Non-USDA water quality programs coordinated by the Environmental Protection Agency, including 21 National Estuary Program projects and 6 regional water quality programs. USDA provides technical and financial assistance to landowners in the project areas for implementing water quality practices.

Management System Evaluation Area—Farm-, field-, and watershed-size test sites for new cropping practices. The MSEA's have installed state-of-the-art field equipment to determine the effects of various crop management systems on water quality. Modified cropping systems specifically suited to the soil, geology, climate, irrigation, nitrogen, and pesticide needs are being tested.

Component Research—Research grants awarded for studies involving the fate and transport of contaminants within surface and groundwater systems, sampling and testing methods, and management and remediation practices. Many of the research projects involve collaboration with other agencies and scientific institutions. ARS and CSREES funded a total of 307 research projects through FY1994.

Chemical Surveys—Agricultural chemical use surveys covering major crops and production areas conducted by the Economic Research Service and the National Agricultural Statistics Service. The annual Cropping Practices Survey (5 since 1990) covers five to seven field crops. The semiannual Vegetable Chemical Use and Economic Survey (3 since 1990) covers 23 crops. The semiannual Fruit and Nuts Chemical Use Survey (2 since 1991) covers 24 crops. Data gathered include types, application, timing, and amounts of fertilizer, pesticides, and other chemicals.

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Estuary and Regional Programs for Water Quality

Estuaries of National Significance

Casco Bay, Maine
Massachusetts Bay
Buzzards Bay, Massachusetts
Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island
Peconic Bay, New York
Long Island Sound
New York-New Jersey Harbor
Delaware Bay
Delaware Inland Bays
Albemarle-Pamlico Sound, North Carolina
Indian River Lagoon, Florida
Sarasota Bay, Florida
Tampa Bay, Florida
Barrataria-Terrebonne Estuary, Louisiana
Galveston Bay, Texas
Corpus Christi Bay, Texas
Santa Monica Bay, California
San Francisco Bay, California
Tillamook Bay, Oregon
Puget Sound, Washington
San Juan Bay, Puerto Rico

Regional Programs

Colorado Salinity
Land and Water 201
Gulf of Mexico
Great Lakes
Lake Champlain
Chesapeake Bay

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